

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY TUNIS IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 21701

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINR, TU, LY, US

SUBJECT: QUAI VIEWS ON TUNISIAN-LIBYAN RELATIONS

REF: TUNIS 5177

1. IN CONVERSATION JULY 26, QUAI DESK OFFICER FOR LIBYA AND TUNISIA BERNARD GIULIERI TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE TUNISIANS LAST WEEK ONCE AGAIN RAISED THE QUESTION OF THE LIBYAN THREAT TO TUNISIA WITH THE FRENCH. THIS WAS DONE BOTH IN TUNIS AND IN A FOLLOW-UP MEETING OF AMB. MABROUK WITH PM CHIRAC. WHILE HE CLAIMED NOT TO KNOW ALL THE SPECIFIC INDICATIONS OF THE LIBYAN MENACE WHICH THE TUNISIANS RAISED, GIULIERI MENTIONED QADHAFI'S THREATENING SPEECHES AND ALLEGED TROOP MOVEMENTS. THE TUNISIANS, IN EFFECT, ASKED FOR SOME GESTURE OF FRENCH SUPPORT.

2. GIULIERI NOTED THAT FOLLOWING HIS MEETING WITH
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CHIRAC, MABROUK TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE PM HAD

EMPHASIZED THE CLOSENESS OF FRANCO-TUNISIAN RELATIONS AND FRENCH INTEREST IN TUNISIAN SECURITY, INCLUDING REFERENCE TO FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. GIULIERI INTIMATED THIS MAY HAVE BEEN PART OF THE FRENCH "GESTURE", ALTHOUGH THE GOF ITSELF HAD MADE NO ANNOUNCEMENT. GIULIERI ALSO SAID THAT THE FRENCH HAVE NO EARLY PLANS FOR A WARSHIP VISIT TO TUNISIA, BUT SUGGESTED THAT THE QUESTION OF FINDING A SUITABLE SHIP FOR A PORT CALL IS UNDER STUDY.

3. AS FOR THE BASIS OF TUNISIAN CONCERNS, GIULIERI SAID THE FRENCH HAVE SCANT EVIDENCE OF ANY LIBYAN MILITARY BUILDUP AGAINST TUNISIA. HE THOUGHT THE TUNISIANS HAD BEEN VERY FRIGHTENED BY THE SUDANESE COUP ATTEMPT, AND THAT IN THEIR NEAR PANIC, HAD CONCLUDED THAT TUNISIA WOULD BE THE NEXT VICTIM. HE WAS NOT CERTAIN TO WHAT DEGREE TUNISIA'S PERENNIAL EFFORTS TO GAIN SUPPORT AGAINST IMAGINARY ENEMIES WAS INVOLVED, BUT AGREED THAT THIS TIME TUNISIAN PERCEPTIONS OF EXTERNAL DANGERS MIGHT BE MORE GENUINE AND THUS REQUIRE SOME POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM TUNISIA'S WESTERN FRIENDS.

4. COMMENT: WE ARE UNABLE HERE TO JUDGE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE ALLEGED LIBYAN THREAT AND THE VALUE OF A COORDINATED WESTERN RESPONSE TO TUNISIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THAT THREAT. HOWEVER, SHOULD THE DEPARTMENT BELIEVE PARALLEL FRANCO-U.S. MEASURES MIGHT BE USEFUL, WE BELIEVE THAT THE GREAT FRENCH INTEREST IN MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY AND THE IMPORTANT PLACE TUNISIA HOLDS IN FRENCH MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY, WOULD MAKE THE FRENCH RECEPTIVE TO CLOSE CONSULTATION IN WASHINGTON, TUNIS OR PARIS ON THIS QUESTION.
GAMMON

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